
Scripts and Skills: Readings¹

What follows is a selection of readings which provide insights from research on commonly heard arguments for unethical choices or commonly experienced tendencies toward those choices, as well as suggestions for crafting strategies and scripts to effectively voice our values. In each case, there is a brief description of how we might use the readings to this purpose. The very brief summaries provided here are not intended as a substitute for reading the material, but rather as an advertisement for doing so and a roadmap suggesting how to apply the readings to the cases that follow.

It is important to note that, as with most powerful tools, the insights and approaches presented in these readings can be used for better and worse purposes. It is useful to understand them, both so that we can recognize their influence on ourselves as well as marshal them to our own purpose. Ultimately however, a tool is only as valuable or “good” as the end to which we put it.

Reading #1

“Teaching Ethics, Heuristics, and Biases” by Robert Prentice,
Journal of Business Ethics Education 1(1) 2004, pp. 57–74.

This relatively brief and readable essay summarizes psychological research on common decision rules and biases that people employ and that can result in less than optimal or even unethical choices. Prentice’s stated objective is to help educators place future business practitioners “on guard” against these tendencies. He acknowledges at the end of his essay that some research has indicated that mere awareness of decision biases does not protect us against them, although it may make us more aware of the tendencies in others. Nevertheless, he notes that others have had some success in a sort of inoculation against such errors in decision-making.²

We have a slightly different purpose than Prentice for including this reading here, however. That is, by understanding these decision-making tendencies, we suggest that we can be better able to unpack and respond to the reasons and rationalizations proffered by others for taking an action that violates our own values. We may be better able to see through and create persuasive scripts for responding to those arguments. And even if we are unable to change the minds of those who presented the rationalizations, we may be able to strengthen the resolve of others who feel as we do and wish to counter the questionable behavior.

¹ This material is part of the Giving Voice to Values (GVV) curriculum. The Yale School of Management was the founding partner, along with the Aspen Institute, which also served as the incubator for GVV. From 2009 to 2015, GVV was hosted and supported by Babson College.

² Prentice also refers readers to a self-assessment survey in *The Psychology of Judgment and Decision-Making* by Scott Plous, which can be used to reveal our own decision biases (McGraw-Hill, 1993) 1–12.

One of the assumptions here is that we are more likely to find the courage and commitment to act on our own values if we can find the words to express them persuasively, to ourselves as well as to others. This assumption is based on the observation that often the first step toward acting on our values is the willingness to “go public” with their expression. And alternatively, if we do not express our values, it unfortunately becomes easier to act as if they were never ours to begin with.

In his article, Prentice lists thirteen decision tendencies and biases that may impact ethical choices, along with a description of the research that supports them and examples of their manifestations. The summary below lists them very briefly, but adds suggestions for using them pro-actively as tools for voicing our values, rather than simply reactively as effects to guard against. *These suggestions are intended to transform his list of risks into a list of potential tools as well:*

Obedience to authority

Citing the famous Milgram experiments, Prentice describes our proven tendency to obey those in authority. While the author appropriately suggests that we should be on guard against this tendency, it might also be useful to consider, when trying to develop effective strategies for voicing our values, whether there are alternate authorities which we might reference in our scripts (our boss’s boss rather than our boss, for example, or the industry codes of conduct rather than our firm’s common practice, or the applicable government regulations).

We might also attempt to defuse the power of this tendency by naming it. That is, we might acknowledge that we are mindful and respectful of the fact that our boss is more experienced and has more authority within the organization, but that the issue is so important and/or that we have collected so much contrary information, that we nevertheless feel the need to raise it.

Social proof

Here Prentice refers to our tendency to succumb to peer pressure, both because we want to “fit in” and succeed within an organization but also because our very thinking is sometimes influenced and altered by the context within which we operate (“groupthink”). Again we might try to defuse this pressure somewhat by naming it, or we might try to build a coalition of like-minded individuals (either within or outside the organization), to thereby alter the social context from which we derive our sense of “proof.”

For example, one senior managing director in a major financial services firm told us that early in his career he and his wife had discussed the high risk nature of his business and he told her he would rather be fired than violate his own values. Sharing one’s position early on may help to head off the bind that many have described experiencing later in their careers, where they feel somehow alone with their ethical choices and fear that their family will be negatively impacted by their decisions. To the contrary, this executive made his family another important social context from which to derive confidence and support, rather than a source of unspoken pressure.

False consensus effect

Research suggests that we tend to believe that others think as we do: that is, we may believe that if we think something is unethical, others will as well. This can lead us to trust individuals whom we should not, for example. On the other hand, if we tend toward cynicism, it may lead us to expect the worst in all situations, whether it is warranted or not.

In general, this finding suggests that is useful to assume nothing and to test our conclusions with others, in both directions. That is, just as our superiors or peers may not always be as honest as we expect them to be, they may not always be as cynical either. If we assume that everyone is ethical, we may become vulnerable to

manipulation, but if we assume that everyone is unethical, we may feel unnecessarily discouraged in our efforts to voice our values.³ And as with most of the biases discussed in Prentice's paper, naming this tendency toward "false consensus" can be a useful way to open a conversation.

Overoptimism

Research suggests that our optimism can lead to irrational choices: e.g., we will make these sales numbers; we will not get caught; and so forth. When crafting responses to rationalizations for unethical behavior that are based on overoptimism, it may be useful to both interrogate the factual basis for the arguments, marshaling counter-arguments when possible, but also to appeal to the optimism of our listeners by positing scenarios of how ethical decision-making can help the firm succeed. That is, it is useful to not only question irrational optimism but also to proffer something positive in its place.

Self-serving bias

Research supports the idea that people tend to look for information that will confirm pre-existing views; to interpret information in ways that support their own view; and to selectively remember the information that supports their view. As with all the biases described here, we do well to consider the ramifications of this tendency for our own judgments as well as for those of others. However, research suggests that awareness of this tendency alone does not necessarily make us proof against it.

Accordingly, one strategy that group leaders or individuals among peers might undertake is to construct a kind of "thought experiment," wherein the team is invited to generate and support alternate interpretations of the same data. This process may generate some persuasive arguments and serve to soften the ground for our efforts to persuade listeners to consider a different, perhaps less self-serving interpretation.

Framing

Research has shown that our responses to the same choice may be quite different, depending on the way the question is framed. For example, Prentice reminds us that "People's risk preferences change dramatically depending on whether an option is framed in terms of potential loss or potential gain...,"⁴ with deciders favoring the potential gain.

Again, this observation can be useful to us both because it helps us to deconstruct and see through the framing that may be applied to make an unethical choice appear necessary or even ethical, and also because it suggests a powerful tool that we may utilize as we frame our proposed alternative action choices. For example, we can frame our choices not only in terms of potential negative consequences avoided (e.g., avoidance of possible legal or regulatory problems, etc.) in an effort to adhere to our values, but also in terms of positive benefits achieved (e.g., greater team cohesion, increased motivation, improved brand value, etc.).

It is important to remember that framing (like all the tools and biases described here) can be an extremely powerful tool, and as noted previously, it can be used for a variety of purposes, for better or worse ends. A useful perspective to maintain when consciously considering ways to re-frame an argument is that our intent is to enable our listeners (or ourselves) to see a position clearly, from a number of different points of view. However, in the end, our goal is to enable individuals to make their own decisions, guided by their own values and priorities, rather than to "manipulate" or trick them into accepting a particular point of view. If we explicitly

³ For an interesting classroom exercise on the perception of "false consensus" and pre-publication research results of the exercise's use with MBAs as well as managers, contact Professor Frank Flynn at Flynn_Francis@GSB.Stanford.EDU. Flynn, F. "Tough choices." Unpublished case. Stanford Graduate School of Business.

⁴ Prentice, 64.

adopt this position, we invite our listeners to see that they have more choices than they may have thought, and that they do, in fact, have the option to act on their values if they so choose.

On the other hand, if we attempt to use re-framing as a means to manipulate others into accepting our position, we invite a kind of escalating “war of frames” and an accompanying cynicism. To the contrary, the encouragement of voice in the workplace suggests that we would welcome the opportunity to test our values-based positions in an open dialogue. For after all, we are just as prone to decision-making biases as our audiences.

Process

Here Prentice refers to the often described “slippery slope”—that is, the tendency for people to willingly take certain actions that they would have found objectionable had they not been eased into them through a series of smaller, less extreme choices. These small choices make the bigger choice appear less objectionable in context. Prentice, of course, suggests that this observation is useful for placing us on guard against corporate cultures that can make unethical choices appear normal and even expected.

However, we would suggest that this tendency is also useful in thinking about ways to make *positive* impacts in an organization. In his powerful article, “Small Wins: Redefining the Scale of Social Problems,” Karl Weick argues that: “People often define social problems in ways that overwhelm their ability to do anything about them...When the magnitude of problems is scaled upward in the interest of mobilizing action, the quality of thought and action declines, because processes such as frustration, arousal, and helplessness are activated.”⁵ Weick’s suggestion that “A series of wins at small but significant tasks... reveals a pattern that may attract allies, deter opponents and lower resistance to subsequent proposals”⁶ may amount to a more positive vision of the “slippery slope.” That is, we may find it helpful to find ways to break down the challenges to our values into smaller, more immediately actionable steps, rather than asking our colleagues to “change the system” all at once.

Cognitive dissonance

This tendency is similar to the self-serving bias described above, and refers to our tendency to rule out information or conclusions that make us uncomfortable because they conflict with already accepted positions. And of course, our colleagues and bosses, as well as we ourselves, are susceptible to this bias. Building an appreciation for contradiction and constructive challenges into the corporate culture may be a useful organizational response to this tendency, but on an individual level, we may need to practice explicitly inviting alternative viewpoints. It may be useful to assemble a network of trusted advisors that includes folks with whom we often disagree but whose intelligence and integrity we respect. And when we are responding to individuals who may be protecting their prior decisions, it may be useful to find ways to appeal to their *other* already accepted positions.

For example, in the “Lisa Baxter: Developing a Voice”⁷ case, we see that the chairman of the board was predisposed to defend another executive whom Baxter had recently fired. She was successful in defending her own decision by appealing to another decision that chairman had already taken: that is, his support for a recently approved new strategic agenda for the firm. His initial reluctance to accept a negative view of an executive whom he had supported was resolved into his commitment to another, more powerful position.

⁵ Karl E. Weick, “Small Wins: Redefining the Scale of Social Problems,” *American Psychologist*, January 1984, 40.

⁶ Weick, 43.

⁷ “Lisa Baxter: Developing A Voice” is a *Giving Voice to Values* case study: www.GivingVoiceToValues.org.

Sunk costs and loss aversion

Here Prentice describes the tendency to continue to pursue a less than optimal course of action simply because we are reluctant to accept that our prior choices or investments were wrong or wasted or because “people detest losses more than they enjoy gains, about twice as much.”⁸

When trying to persuade individuals whom we believe are experiencing this bias, it may be useful to talk about what we have already gained from the prior decision or investment, even if it’s not a financial gain. We may have other “returns” we can point out, whether they are knowledge, relationships, etc. We may also use stories of how other firms have benefited from similar mistakes, providing an alternative way to view the investment.

Tangible and the abstract and time-delay traps

Research argues that “vivid, tangible, contemporaneous factors” affect our choices more powerfully than those that are “removed in time and space,”⁹ and research also supports our usual preference for immediate rather than delay gratification. As Prentice illustrates, it can be “...difficult to decide to pull the plug on a product (even a Ford Pinto or a Dalkon Shield), lay off employees working on the product, and damage the company’s profits in the short-term when the potential injuries are hypothetical at this point, temporally-distant, and again, will be visited upon merely statistical victims.”¹⁰

The challenge for us then becomes to somehow make the distant seem near; the statistics feel like real individuals; and the hypothetical feel as concrete as strong odds can make it. The use of analogies or concrete stories from our own firm’s or others’ experience may be helpful, the more similar the situation the better, of course. And again, we may explicitly name the ubiquitous pitfall of discounting the future and the distant.

Reading #2

“Ethical Leadership and the Psychology of Decision-making” by David M. Messick & Max H. Bazerman, *Sloan Management Review*, Winter, 1996, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 9–22, Reprint 3721.

Professors Messick and Bazerman have taken a very similar approach to Robert Prentice in this article. They describe their intent as follows: “...executive ethics has been dominated by the assumption that executives are constantly faced with an explicit trade-off between ethics and profits. We argue...[it] is more commonly affected by psychological tendencies that create undesirable behavior from both ethical and rational perspectives. Identifying and confronting these psychological tendencies will increase the success of executives and organizations.”

This essay is included here because, unlike Prentice who addresses his article to professors, Messick and Bazerman have written their essay for executives. The material covered is quite similar, however, although Messick and Bazerman cluster and organize the various research-driven conclusions about human decision biases and tendencies differently. Rather than simply listing them as Prentice does, they break them into three categories: Theories about the World, Theories about Other People, and Theories about Ourselves. Given the overlap in content, the following discussion presents Messick and Bazerman’s organizational scheme but only describes the biases and tendencies where they are not self-evident or were not covered in the previous discussion.

⁸ Prentice, 68.

⁹ Prentice, 67.

¹⁰ Prentice, 67.

Under “Theories about the World,” Messick and Bazerman argue that when confronted with the complexity of decision making, people often over-simplify in order to find a way to act. Like Karl Weick, they observe our tendency to become overwhelmed but rather than naturally pursuing the strategic re-definition of large problems that Weick recommends, we often fall prey to a set of decision biases (similar to those Prentice pointed out but labeled differently):

- Ignoring low-probability events
- Limiting the search for stakeholders
- Ignoring the possibility that the public will “find out”
- Discounting the future
- Undervaluing collective outcomes (e.g., externalities)

Messick and Bazerman also point out a set of systematic errors we tend to make in assessing the likelihood of certain outcomes:

Denying uncertainty

The authors observe that in our desire to feel in control, we try to base judgments upon past experience. However, this may lead us to deny the importance of chance and to project causal connections between events and actions where there are only coincidental ones.

Risk trade-offs

Here the authors describe our tendency to think about risk in less than coherent ways. For example, we tend to value the total elimination of risk more highly than a partial reduction of risk, even if the amount of damage or loss eliminated is higher in the latter case.

Risk framing

Similar to the discussion of framing and loss aversion above, the authors explain that people “treat risks concerning perceived gains...differently from risks concerning perceived loses...”¹¹ tending to favor gains over losses.

Finally, Messick and Bazerman talk about how executives’ theories of the world are influenced by their assumptions about what causes what and who or what is to blame for events. The quality of their ethical actions is related to the quality of their analysis, so these assumptions are important to understand. The authors observe executives’ tendencies to:

Focus on people

We often blame people because it is easier to imagine eliminating one bad apple than changing an entire system.

¹¹ Messick and Bazerman, 13.

Different events

Here the authors explain that often people find it difficult to come to common decisions about why things happen because they are explaining different phenomena. In the terms introduced above, are we explaining the effects of a particular person or of an entire system?

Sins of omission

The authors point out that when we try to find who or what to blame for a particular situation, it is easier to observe and judge the quality of what did happen than of what failed to happen.

As Messick and Bazerman turn to “Theories about Other People,” they identify biases that can cause executives to make less than accurate judgments about people and thereby contribute to poor and unethical decisions. Here they talk about Ethnocentrism and stereotypes. Understanding these tendencies and biases can again enable us to see through our own and others poor decisions, but they also can provide us with insight that can improve the scripts we prepare for persuading others to consider our values-based positions. For example, understanding that we tend to harbor “in-group favoritism” can enable us to both name and try to defuse that tendency, but also perhaps to try to find voices from within the so-called in-group to become allies with us in raising a values-based position.

Finally, Messick and Bazerman talk about executives’ “Theories about Ourselves,” pointing out that the confident individuals who often become business leaders may be especially vulnerable to the illusion of superiority, self-serving fairness biases and overconfidence.

Both the Prentice and Messick and Bazerman essays are described here because their approach and examples differ, although the content overlaps. Different audiences may find one easier to use than the other. However, in both cases, they assumption is that by understanding these biases and tendencies, we can try to protect ourselves from falling prey to them.

But our intention here, as noted above, is somewhat different. We suggest that in addition to increasing awareness of personal biases, knowing about these tendencies can help us to unpack and better argue against those commonly heard reasons and rationalization for less than ethical actions in the workplace.

Reading #3

“Ways of Thinking About and Across Differences,” Mary C. Gentile
(Harvard Business School #395-117, January 1995.)

In this essay, Gentile describes and critiques many of the typical reasoning pitfalls we fall into when dealing with questions of diversity, whether it is gender, ethnic, racial or religious diversity, or even diversity of thought and ideology. Examples of various escapes from these pitfalls are also included in the form of questions to ask ourselves and others. The author then provides a framework for thinking about and re-framing these same questions.

Although this essay focuses specifically on diversity, many of the reasoning patterns and frameworks described can be applied to other sorts of values conflicts as well, and so it is included here as a suggested reading. In particular, the essay notes that anthropologists, linguists and philosophers have pointed out a tendency in human thought and language toward duality or oppositionality. We tend to view situations through a framing lens of right/wrong, either/or, or you/me. Gentile discusses the power of naming this tendency and

thereby revealing the ways in which it can distort the real impacts and the variety of choices available to us. The author goes on to share nine reasoning patterns that illustrate and critique this tendency toward dichotomies that can limit our thinking. Six of these patterns are particularly relevant to us here:

Mary Ann Glendon's "Rights Talk"¹²

Harvard Law professor Glendon describes a tendency she sees in American discourse toward emphasizing individual rights to the exclusion of balancing "responsibilities," thereby limiting the ability to find reasonable and fair resolutions to societal conflicts. This trap of seeing the imposition of a "responsibility" as a constraint on one's individual rights can limit our ability to recognize that personal sacrifice for a greater organizational or even societal good can be a positive outcome, even for the one who appears to be making the sacrifice. That is, this kind of dichotomy—rights OR responsibilities, instead of rights AND responsibilities—can limit our ability to recognize broader, shared purposes that we could otherwise embrace as a personal, as well as social, benefit.

Chris Argyris's "Defensive Reasoning"

Organizational scholar Argyris describes managers' tendency toward defensive reasoning and explains that: "defensive reasoning encourages individuals to keep private the premises, inferences, and conclusions that shape their behavior and to avoid testing them in a truly independent, objective fashion."¹³ He observes that this behavior is born out of a view that we are either winners or losers, in control or controlled, and that therefore, in an effort to protect ourselves from perspectives that may threaten our perceived status, we become closed off from new information or points of view. Argyris's intent is to illustrate how this approach leads to poor decisions because it precludes learning (which by definition is about engaging with new ideas, different from the ones we came in with). For our purposes here, Argyris's observations can illustrate why folks can be closed toward our efforts to voice our values, and they suggest a way to frame this effort as about learning and new information/data that can enhance all of our decision making.

Self-definition through oppositionality

Simone de Beauvoir¹⁴ wrote about people's tendency to define themselves in opposition to others and how this limits their ability to identify with, understand and even value the viewpoints of others. For our purposes here, this insight is important for it suggests that we may often find it effective to voice our values in ways that show how they are linked to, continuous with or relevant to the perspectives, goals and identities of the very people we are trying to persuade. In other words, allow them a way to accept our perspective that permits them to change without requiring them to hate their past. Look for the goals that we already share and appeal to those.

Shelby Steele's "Seeing for Innocence"

In his book, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America*,¹⁵ Steele provides an apt illustration of the phenomenon described above. Although he is talking about U.S. race relations, his observations hold relevance for other conflicts over values as well. He illustrates how difficult it can be to change our behavior if that change requires accepting that we were somehow guilty previously. This phenomenon explains the power of the rationalizations we and our colleagues often construct to defend behaviors that may otherwise violate our values.

¹² Mary Ann Glendon, *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse*. (New York: The Free Press, 1991).

¹³ Chris Argyris, "Teaching Smart People How to Learn" *Harvard Business Review* (May-June 1991), 103.

¹⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, "Introduction to The Second Sex," *New French Feminisms*, ed., Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken Books, 1981).

¹⁵ Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

Thomas Gilovich's How We Know What Isn't So

Gilovich's book¹⁶ is a readable summary of many of the types of reasoning biases and pitfalls described by Prentice and Bazerman and Messick above. In particular, Gentile summarizes some of the tendencies that are most relevant when we encounter people or ideas different from our own, along with some of the corrective tactics that Gilovich suggests—tactics that could be adopted both for testing the validity of our own conclusions and for countering common rationalizations for apparently unethical behavior.

Pareto optimality/scarcity thinking

Gentile defines and describes the limitations of these common reasoning patterns. The *pareto optimality* condition in equilibrium models of optimal resource allocation and a preoccupation with *resource scarcity*, although helpful in some instances, can both be premised on false assumptions; can operate to obscure deeper conditions of inequity; and can constrain creativity and positive change. They are both often adopted to defend choices that may challenge our values of fairness and compassion, and so understanding their limitations may be useful in crafting response scripts.

After illustrating the various forms of dichotomy that can limit our reasoning and values choices, Gentile's framework for *Reframing Diversity* may be a useful tool to help us better understand and ultimately influence the individuals with whom we disagree in a values conflict. This model consists of six observations about difference that can lead us to re-think the way we view and position ourselves in relation to the individual whom we are trying to influence. (And the essay offers an example of the application of this framework.)

Briefly the model includes the following insights. When confronting a difficult values-based conflict, this framework calls for recognizing that we, and our audience, all have *multiple identities* within ourselves: we are not simply representatives of one perspective or value system or group identity. So for example, it may be useful to remind the individual whom we are trying to influence of a time when he or she had taken a stand similar to our own.

Secondly, different ones of these multiple identities may feel more *salient* at one time, in one context or another. And there may be different *costs and benefits* associated with identifying with one or another of these identities in different contexts. Therefore, it may be helpful to understand the pressures that are leading the person we are trying to influence to take a particular stand at this point in time. These insights can help us to craft a response or script that is driven by the needs and interests of the person we are trying to influence, rather than by the reasons that would be most convincing to us.

Some of us may have a *choice* of whether we are publicly viewed as representing an identity or perspective and some may not. Therefore, the challenge to take a different position or to even be heard if we try to do so, may be different. For example, if the person we are trying to influence has a history of taking a particular kind of position, it may be more difficult for him or her to change this stance. Therefore, it might be useful for us to talk not only about why we think they should change but also to suggest an approach and/or a story they might employ to do so.

We all are capable of, and indeed have, *redefined or changed* our positions and values at some times. This is the lesson of the *Giving Voice to Values* exercise, "A Tale of Two Stories," and it signals the importance of viewing the individual we are trying to influence as a complex person, driven by varying motivations. In this way, we may be less likely to escalate our differences into all out conflicts (i.e., s/he is an unethical person, or

¹⁶ Thomas Gilovich, *How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).

is always wrong), and we may be more likely to look for the kinds of values-based stands he or she has taken in the past, so that we can appeal to that side of the person.

And finally, our differences do not preclude the identification and pursuit of some *shared goals*. This of course is the challenge of our reframing.

Reading #4

Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Minds by Howard Gardner
(Harvard Business School Press, 2006)

Gardner describes how and when people are most likely to change their minds about all manner of things. In the first chapter he presents seven “levers” that can be helpful in attempts to change our own and others’ minds about how to approach a particular decision. The levers are outlined on pages 14–18, and they include:

Reason

“Reason can involve sheer logic, the use of analogies, or the creation of taxonomies.”¹⁷

Research

Research may include gathering data, performing due diligence and/or collecting examples to support one’s position.

Resonance

“A view, idea, or perspective resonates to the extent that it feels right to an individual, seems to fit the current situation, and convinces the person that further considerations are superfluous...Resonance often comes about because one feels a ‘relation’ to a mind-changer, finds that person ‘reliable’ or ‘respects’ that person...”¹⁸

Representational redescriptions

Gardner has found that people are more likely to change their minds about something if the new concept can be presented in a variety of different formats: for example, with numbers; via a verbal expression of the supporting theory; in an analogy or story; with case examples; graphically; visually (e.g., a cartoon or photograph); and so forth.

Resources and rewards

Gardner observes that the availability of resources or rewards, as enablers or incentives to change minds and behaviors, can support this change. However, without the presence of some of the other levers, such a change is likely to be only temporary.

Real world events

Gardner observes that events in the wider societal context can aid or hinder our efforts to persuade people to change their minds about a particular decision. It becomes important to pay attention to the world outside

¹⁷ Gardner, 15.

¹⁸ Gardner, 15, 16.

the organization, and to consider how to tap or respond to such events. For example, during the corporate scandals of the late 1990s and early 2000s, individuals could point to daily media stories on the personal and public costs of violating and losing the trust of consumers, investors and regulators to support their arguments for greater integrity and transparency.

Resistances

This last item is not really a lever; but rather it is more of a barrier that needs to be understood. Gardner observes that there are always factors that mitigate against changing minds, including the fact that as we age, we become more and more invested in our previous ways of seeing and ordering the world. The “switching costs,” if you will, feel higher. The stronger the resistance, the more important it is for the other levers to be powerful and aligned.

As we scan Gardner’s list, it seems apparent that often our values-based positions are rooted in a sense of “resonance.” That is, a particular position feels right or wrong to us. However, as we consider how to craft a strategy and scripts for persuading others to see and hopefully accept our position, we have the opportunity to both build a stronger and more persuasive argument, and also perform a sort of due diligence on our own initial responses. Is our initial response really right?

We also can note that, while our own sense of what is right may make further arguments feel unnecessary, we are more likely to be effective in influencing others if we attempt to utilize as many of the levers identified here.

Gardner also notes that the selection of formats for expression (with regard to the 4th lever, (representational redescriptions) may be influenced by our target audience. For example, he notes that stories are particularly useful in attempting to influence large, diverse groups, while theories can be used in communicating with smaller, more homogeneous groups, and that of course, interpersonal insights and skills are critical when addressing individuals personally.¹⁹

He also notes that we may find it less difficult to change minds “...when individuals find themselves in a new environment, surrounded by peers of a different persuasion (e.g., when one enters college), or when individuals undergo shattering experiences...or encounter luminous personalities.”²⁰ Obviously, we cannot—and would not want to—arrange some of these factors, but we may be able to utilize the observation that a new environment or exposure to peers with very different points of view can be helpful. For example, something as simple as having a conversation off-site may shift the usual dynamics.

Finally, Gardner identifies a number of tools that may be used by those who wish to influence or change another mind.²¹ These tools include:

- Emphasizing the commonalities between yourself and your audience. What do you have in common, such as profession, ultimate goals, background experiences, and so forth?
- Inviting your target audience to collaborate with you on a shared agenda.
- Establishing a two-way dialogue, so that you can engage your audience’s interest and ensure that your viewpoints are presented in ways that are relevant and resonant to them.
- Paying attention to the tone of the exchange, and trying to keep it positive and open rather than hostile.

¹⁹ Gardner, 66.

²⁰ Gardner, 62.

²¹ Gardner, 160,161.

Reading #5

“How Advertising Practitioners View Ethics: Moral Muteness, Moral Myopia, and Moral Imagination” by Minette E. Drumwright and Patrick E. Murphy, *Journal of Advertising*, vol. 33, no. 2, Summer 2004, 7–24.

Most of the readings noted here provide insights about the ways we tend to think, feel and talk about a wide variety of choices and preferences encountered in any business function. This essay by Drumwright and Murphy, however, is particularly focused on marketing-related decision making. The authors interviewed advertising agency personnel in order to identify the types of values conflicts they reported experiencing and to understand how these professionals make choices about those conflicts. The essay both identifies the reasons and rationalizations often used to justify choices that appeared to raise values conflicts, as well as some possible responses to those reasons. And finally, the authors describe what organizational practices enabled some agencies to more openly voice and act on their values.

Drumwright and Murphy identify a number of reasons and rationalizations used to justify choices, even when they appeared to raise values conflicts, including:

- Consumers Are Smart
- Passing the Buck (to any number of parties: families, the law, media, regulators, colleagues, and so forth)
- What is Legal is Moral
- The First Amendment Misunderstanding (that is, “free speech” is mistakenly equated with the idea that all speech is equal and should therefore be protected)
- Going Native (that is, getting too close to a client and therefore failing to see clearly when they or the marketers are crossing ethical lines)
- The Ostrich Syndrome (that is, just deciding not to ask questions to which we may not want to hear the answers)
- Compartmentalization (that is, choosing not to focus on the broader impacts of what one is doing)
- The Client is Always Right
- Ethics Is Bad for Business (that is, the assumption that ethics is only about constraining our degrees of freedom and therefore limiting our business choices)
- Pandora’s Box Syndrome (that is, fear that voicing a values concern will lead to never ending stream of other challenges).

In this essay, the authors provide marketing-related examples of each of these perspectives, as well as some possible arguments to use in trying to respond or reframe them. Although many of the “rationalizations” are actually illustrations of the more generic list of biases we see with Prentice and Bazerman and Messick, this essay is especially suited to be used as an accompaniment to marketing case examples of values conflicts.

Reading #6

“Reporting,” by Mary C. Gentile, *Giving Voice to Values* curriculum

Just as the Drumwright and Murphy article can be used to generate discussions of how to voice our values in the Marketing context, the Reporting module of the *Giving Voice to Values* curriculum illustrates ways to raise such discussions in an Accounting context. It is composed of a brief introduction, a suggested video clip and four case examples, and an annotated bibliography of eight possible readings with suggestions on how to use them. Included is an essay titled “Discussions about Ethics in the Accounting Classroom: Student Assumptions and Faculty Paradigms,” which is unique to the *Giving Voice to Values* curriculum and contains a number of tailored examples of responses to often heard rationalizations for violating accounting standards.